

Loppet chance to ski Banff to Lake Louise

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The Lake Louise-Banff Loppet cross country ski race, a long-standing tradition in the area, is on Sunday, Jan. 25.

The race typically has between 1200-1400 skiers made up of individual skiers as well as teams of two to six skiers. There are also 40 volunteers placed throughout the trails to help make the race run smoothly.

Most of the skiers involved in the race come from the Bow Valley, but they also get racers from Calgary, Red Deer and the Columbia Valley. The fastest skiers usually finish the course in about four and a half hours.

Participants will pick up their bibs at the Alpine Room at the Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise at 7 a.m. with a pre-event meeting at 7:30.

The race gets underway on the lake in front of the Chateau at 8 a.m. The loppet runs a total of 71.2 kilometres, divided into six legs. The final leg wraps up at the Gazebo at Central Park in Banff.

Racers must be past Baker Creek by 10:30 a.m. or surrender their bib. There is also a cutoff point at Sawback at 2:30 p.m.

"Parks Canada has connected tracks to existing trails, so this is the only time you can ski from Lake Louise to Banff," said race director Jo Lunn.

Following the race, awards and a reception will be held at The Gooseberry in the Sally Borden Building at



Submitted photo

A skier in last year's Lake Louise-Banff Loppet battles the conditions. This year's Loppet will take place on Sunday, Jan. 25.

the Banff Centre at 5 p.m.

The first documentation of this event took place in 1929. A modern version was rekindled in 1979 with the entry of two teams. Since then, the race has grown to 20 teams and 40 individuals.

"Some of the participants are on the national team, while there are others are out there to have some fun," said Lunn.

Since the Loppet is a classic race, the option of "skating" may only take place on the final leg of the race.

If the weather does not co-operate, an alternate date of Saturday, Jan. 31, has been set for the event. The race is not full yet, so anyone interested in registering can do it online at www.loppet.ca.